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9 Things I Love about the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack – Review

By Michael Sheehan(https://www.hightechdad.com/author/michael/) ■ November 18, 2018(https://www.hightechdad.com/2018/11/18/)

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Review of the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack - a backpack with lots of storage compartment, ergonomic design, and some tech surprises as well!

I have to admit – I have a bit of a backpack obsession. Every year or so, I swap out my backpack (that I use every workday on my commute), with the next best one. I have pretty high standards when it comes to choosing a backpacks, particularly around durability, features, and comfort. And while backpack construction and features have definitely improved since I was in school, there are still plenty of sub-par packs out there in my opinion. For the past month or so, I have been using the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack (https://www.swissgear.com/swissgear-5358-scansmart), and honestly, it has checked off a ton of things that I look for in a quality backpack. (*Disclosure below.)



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To be honest, while I had seen a lot of Swissgear backpacks in the wild, I had never considered actually getting one, mainly because the packs that I had were “doing ok.” But that all changed when my buddy showed me one that he had picked up and all of the pockets and solid construction on a trip to the mountains. And, as we were geeking out on the Swissgear pack (not the 5358 model but a different one), we actually had to go to Twitter to ask Swissgear what some straps were for.

Michael Sheehan @HighTechDad

GROUPIII000097

@SWISSGEAR My buddy has this backpack & I'm jealous! But we are both trying to figure out what the



jealous! But we are both trying to figure out what the 2 strap loops at the top of the shoulder straps are for. Can you help?



12:56 PM · Sep 8, 2018

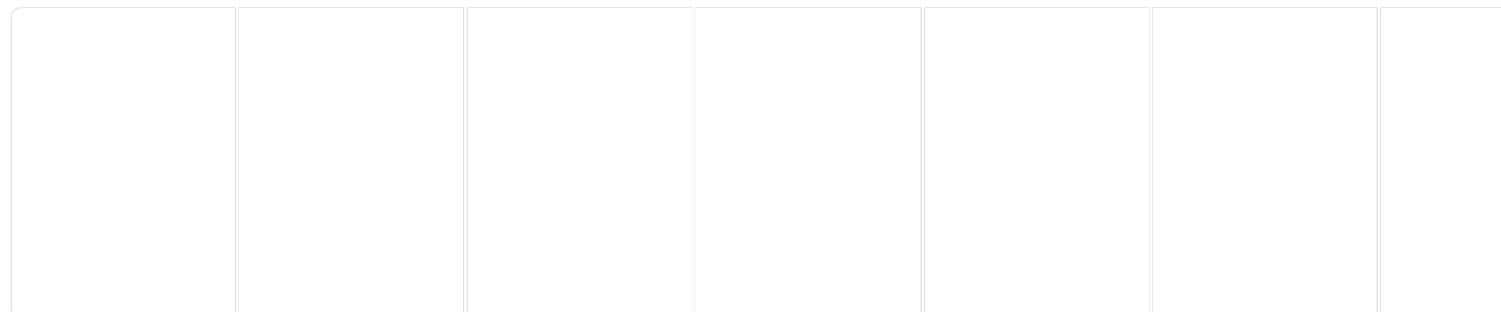


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It turns out those mysterious straps, common on many of the Swissgear backpacks, is part of the suspension system and designed to help stabilize the pack as you walk. Mystery solved!

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So, once I got the Swissgear 5358, I really started geeking out on all of the features. So I thought for this review, I would list out all of the things that I discovered and why I like them so much. And note, I have been using this backpack every day on my commute for the past month or so. It's been put through real-world testing. And for me, it has to be able to handle all of my electronics and gadgets, yet still remain comfortable.

1 – It's a Great Size

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As I just mentioned, for me a backpack must be able to store all of my daily electronics, yet still have plenty of room for other stuff. Currently, I carry a laptop and charger, iPad, papers, pens, business cards, a ton of various connection cables, a battery (more on that shortly), my lunch pack, and a bunch of other odds and ends. And even after that, there is plenty of room for more.

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The Swissgear 5358 measures 18" by 11.5" by 7" when packed which is quite large but not massive. That's enough room to handle much more than what I mentioned above. It has a 30-liter capacity. When it is empty, it weighs about 3 pounds which isn't too heavy.

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2 – Solid Construction Material



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I have the black version (with red accents) to match the HighTechDad colors (of course). The material is quite durable and is made from abrasion-resistant polyester fabric. While I haven't taken it out in the rain, I'm assuming that it is weather resistant to protect the contents inside. I would not, however, want to have it exposed to long sessions of rain before testing that out.

After my month or so usage, the seams are still tight, and I haven't noticed any tears or issues. There are no hanging threads or anything that would indicate poor craftsmanship. Everything seems solid.

3 – Zippers Do Matter



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Recently, one of my daughters when on a long trip where she had to use a duffle bag to hold a much larger hiking backpack. We had purchased some of those cheap travel locks which in my mind don't really lock things well but simply provide a deterrent from someone quickly opening up a pack to grab something. But, there was no way to actually lock the zippers, either because there was only one zipper, or when there were two, they didn't have any holes to attach a lock.

The Swissgear 5358 Backpack is really designed for travelers and those tiny travel locks. All of the three main compartments have dual zippers, and these zippers can be locked together easily.

4 - Extremely Comfortable



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When trying on a backpack, you should really try to fill it up with about as much weight as you would on a typical day. That way, you can get a true feel as to how the pack rides on your back. Once you have the weight inside, you will want to pay close attention to the various straps and how you can adjust them. Depending on the backpack, you may have a lot of options or very few. The nice thing is, the Swissgear 5358 is quite easy to adjust. It has ergonomically contoured straps and a sternum strap that goes across your chest to prevent the pack from bouncing.



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On the front sides, there are also compression straps, and while they don't add to the comfort, they do allow your pack to be a bit less bulky.



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It's also important to look at the backside – the part that is actually against your back. This Swissgear model has nice padding that definitely adds to the comfort. The design allows for some additional airflow to prevent your back from getting too hot (which is assisted by the mesh fabric). I found through my daily usage that the Swissgear 5358 is quite comfortable, even when loaded up with gear. When properly adjusted, the weight was quite evenly dispersed and did not weigh down on my shoulders in any way whatsoever. The pack actually sat quite nicely, compared to other packs I've had in the past.

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Oh, and those mysterious straps I mentioned at the beginning of the article? They are there, adding to the stability.



5 – TSA Friendly



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I haven't yet taken this pack on a flight, but I'm actually looking forward to it. The main compartment which has internal storage for a laptop and table actually unzips fully to lay flat on an x-ray machine, with the laptop being on one side and the tablet on the other. This design allows for a much easier inspection by airport security or TSA and often eliminates the need from having to remove the laptops from the bag. (This is not guaranteed, however, especially if you have a lot of other things in your bag.)

But having the lay-flat design that opens all the way up makes for much easier access to items inside. And I now tend to make sure that both of the zippers are always closed at the top to make it more convenient to open (just a personal preference). The other compartments do open wide but not like the main compartment.

6 – Lots of Different Storage Compartments

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So let's talk about internal compartments. There are many of them, so many that I always need to actually have the backpack on hand. And, there are smaller compartments and pockets within larger ones. It's easy to keep everything organized, almost to the point of losing things that are stored away!

Let's start with the Scan Smart compartment that I just mentioned. This opens wide up and stores a laptop and tablet on opposite sides. The laptop compartment is nicely padded as well and has a velcro flap to hold your laptop inside. I believe it can handle up to a 17" laptop. My smaller laptop fits with lots of space to spare. Also on that side with the laptop is another pocket specifically designed to hold a portable battery. I will go into this shortly.



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Directly in front of the Scan Smart compartment is another large compartment. Inside of this are two smaller pockets that have velcro covers. I use one of these smaller pockets to carry my mouse. The other one is labeled to carry your power supply, but I found it to be just a little too small for that. I found it easier to just put the power supply at the bottom of the Scan Smart compartment. I put my lunch bag in this second compartment, and there is still room to stuff a lightweight jacket in as well. There's also a small mesh pocket inside.



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Also, the bottom part of this compartment is shared with the shoe holder. This shoe holder section is actually accessible from the outside and can hold a pair of gym shoes quite easily. The shoe holder pocket can be zippered up on the inside if you don't want to use as a shoe holder.



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In front of that compartment is yet another smaller compartment. This one has room for yet more gear as well as pockets for pens/pencils and business cards. There is a keychain clip and many pockets. As I look into that compartment now as I'm writing this, I found that I have stored a USB hard drive, a mic, a charger, and a bunch of other odds and ends.



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On the front of that third compartment is yet another zippered compartment, directly accessible from the outside. While it's not huge, I have my collection of various cables and other items that I might need to access regularly.

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We aren't done yet! On one side of the pack is the access to the shoe holder. On the opposite side is a mesh pocket which I use to carry a compact umbrella. See below for what is behind that mesh pocket!

7 – Keeping Drinks Cool



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As I mentioned directly above, there is a zippered pocket directly behind the mesh pocket where I have my umbrella. If you unzip this pocket, you will see that it is lined in silver.

This pocket is insulated so that you can keep a small bottle of water or a can cold for an extended period. This was a great little touch!

8 – A Space for Glasses



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At the top of the pack is yet another zippered compartment. And, it actually has hard plastic walls. This is a dedicated glasses pocket so that you don't need to carry your eyeglass case with you everywhere. Just put your eyeglasses directly into this compartment, and they are protected safe and secure yet easily accessed.

9 – Why Is “USB” in the Name?



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So I saved the geekiest thing for last. And this is pretty cool. Remember how I said that there was a dedicated pocket for a portable battery? Well, there is a reason for that. Built into the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack is the ability to run power from the inside of the back (from a portable USB battery) out to the front of the backpack to one of the shoulder straps. There is a red wire that you plug into your USB battery (not included with the pack, by the way) and then there is a USB port on one of the front straps.

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Just plug another USB charging cable into that port on the strap and then plug into your smartphone and you have a built-in charging solution. And, on that same strap, there is a flexible mesh pocket to hold your smartphone. One thing to note, the mesh pocket barely holds some of the “plus-sized” smartphones. I think some of the newer model 5358’s have slightly larger mesh pockets. I was able to snuggly put an iPhone XS Max in there, but just barely.



5358-backpack-review-7-closeup.jpg)

You could, conceivably, just run a longer charging cable out to your front shirt or jacket pocket quite easily. But the nice thing is, the charging infrastructure is built right into the backpack. This got a nice checkmark in my “high-tech” box!

Final Thoughts on the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack

As you can probably see, I truly like the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack. It has many, many storage compartments, many of which have dedicated uses (keeping water cool, holding a portable battery, storing shoes, protecting laptops, and more). The backpack is nicely designed and fits well ergonomically. It's quite comfortable to wear even with a heavier load. I do wish it had a double layer for the **GROUPH100012** ↑



The Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack (<https://www.swissgear.com/swissgear-5358-scansmart>) retails for \$120. As of this writing, it is currently on sale for \$90 (probably for the holidays). You can pick it up on Amazon for \$90.00 (<https://amzn.to/3o8q2Rt>) as well. For all of the features and design elements, I view this as a terrific deal right now.

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HTD says: As someone who is obsessed about getting a backpack with a great design, lots of storage options, is travel-friendly, and is even "tech-enabled," I feel that the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack is one of the best, multi-purpose, and extremely functional backpacks available.

HighTechDad Ratings

Ease-of-Use	★★★★★
Family-Friendly	★★★★★
Price Point	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★

Summary

As someone who is obsessed about getting a backpack with a great design, lots of storage options, is travel-friendly, and is even "tech-enabled," I feel that the Swissgear 5358 USB ScanSmart Backpack is one of the best, multi-purpose, and extremely functional backpacks available. This Swissgear backpack has so many different types of compartments, you are sure to find a space for everything. And it is designed with the traveler in mind. You could be a commuter like me, or someone traveling around the world.

4.3

★★★★★

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There is enough storage for day-excursions or a trip to school or the office. I particularly like the tech feature of having the backpack wired to supply power from inside one of the compartments and out to the front strap. Also, having a place to stash dirty shoes away from the rest of your items is a plus. And the dedicated and protected glasses compartment is fantastic. I have a pretty high standard for backpacks, and the Swissgear 5358 seems to hit those high standards.

Pros

- ✓ Many compartments
- ✓ Tech-enabled
- ✓ Great for travel
- ✓ Looks stylish
- ✓ Great price

Cons

- ✗ Smartphone holder might not be big enough for larger smartphones

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